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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000562

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/OHI, EUR/NB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/25/2014

TAGS: PHUM PREL SOCI LH

SUBJECT: COURT FINES EDITOR FOR DISSEMINATING ANTISEMITIC EDITORIALS

REF: A. 04 VILNIUS 212

1B. 04 VILNIUS 256

Classified By: political-economic officer Nancy Cohen  
for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (U) A Vilnius administrative court fined Rimvydas Valentukevicius, editor of the Russian-language edition of the "Respublika" newspaper, 1,000 litas (\$360) on May 25 for publishing a series of anti-Semitic editorials in 2004. The court held that, by publishing the editorials claiming that Jews and homosexuals "rule the world" (ref B), the paper violated administrative law prohibiting "dissemination of a publication that instigates national, racial, or religious discord." On June 14, the court will take up the charges against the editor-in-chief and author of the editorials, Vitas Tomkus.

12. (U) Simonas Alperavicius, President of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, told us that the prosecutor had discussed the amount of the fine with him in advance of the decision. Alperavicius recognized that the court could have imposed a fine of up to 6,000 litas (\$2,180), but remarked that the amount of the fine was not important. More important, he said, was that the court find Valentukevicius in violation of the law. Alperavicius commented that Valentukevicius is "not a bad guy" and had simply followed Tomkus's orders.

13. (C) Comment: The court adjudicated the easier of the cases relating to the Tomkus articles, involving only dissemination of material and not instigation of hatred. It's reasonable to expect that the court will at least find that Tomkus violated the same law by disseminating the same articles. It is less certain that they will find him guilty of instigating anti-Semitism. The prosecution and adjudication of the cases appear to conform to Lithuanian legal norms, which go much further in proscribing "hate" speech than U.S. laws.

14. (C) It takes little to trigger public anti-Semitic discourse in some of the grimmer corners of Lithuanian society. Nonetheless, because the court's ruling appears just but carries little penalty, we do not expect much outcry about this decision. Neither do we rule out that Tomkus will try to reclaim the spotlight with a provocative response.  
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